

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 ES-01 /008 W
-----141124Z 032487 /12

R 140845Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3023
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 0447

STADIS//////////

LIMDIS

FOR EA ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, XB
SUBJ: ...AND...OH YES, BURMA IN THE POST VIETNAM ERA

REF: STATE 25347

1. FORTUNATELY, IN THE YEARS SINCE BILL SULLIVAN HAD THE
JOB, ATTENTION SPANS OF BURMA DESK OFFICERS SEEM TO HAVE
LENGTHENED (THOUGH WE WILL STILL PROBABLY PLACE FEWER DEMANDS
ON TIME OF THE NEW ASSISTANT SECRETARY THAN MOST OF HIS
OTHER CHARGES), SO A BRIEF MESSAGE WITH A BURMA FOCUS MAY
FIND READERSHIP. WE DESERVE IT, FOR WE HAV A FEW

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MICROCOSMIC SITUATIONS HERE THAT ALREADY HAVE OR MAY
ASSUME WIDER IMPLICATIONS IN THE NEW FEW YEARS.

2. OUR RELATIONS WITH BURMA ILLUSTRATE THE WAY IN WHICH,
DIVESTED OF AN EXCESSIVE AND MEDDLESOME CONCERN OVER GEO-
POLITICS AND THE SECURITY OF OTHERS, AND BLESSED WITH A
MINIMUM OF HIGH-LEVEL CONCERN AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL, THE

U.S. CAN PURSUE RATIONAL POLICIES KEYED TO THE NATIONAL INTEREST WITHOUT SACRIFICE OF PRINCIPLE OR GOOD WILL.

A. OUR MAJOR CURRENT NATIONAL INTEREST TO WHICH RELATIONS WITH BURMA ARE PERTINENT IS NARCOTICS CONTROL. AS LONG AS THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE REMAINS A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS TRAFFIC, AND AS LONG AS COOPERATION WITH THE GUB REMAINS A RELATIVELY EFFICIENT MEANS OF ATTACKING THE PROBLEM, THIS INTEREST WILL REMAIN PARAMOUNT. THIS EMBASSY HAS BEEN AT PAINS TO KEEP IT CLEAR TO THE BURMESE THAT OUR MAIN INTEREST IS IN NARCOTICS CONTROL, AND NOT IN KILLING INSURGENTS PER SE (THOUGH WE MAY WISH THEM WELL IN THEIR EFFORTS TO HOLD THEIR UNION TOGETHER, IT IS NOT OUR CIVIL WAR). IF, AS SEEMS POSSIBLE, WE CAN HELP THE GUB TO FOCUS MORE EFFORT ON SUCH NON-LETHAL CONTROL METHODS AS HERBICIDES, WE SHOULD DO SO.

B. LARGELY A DERIVATIVE OF OUR DOMINANT INTEREST IN NARCOTICS CONTROL, OUR DESIRE TO SEE A MORE COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURMA AND THAILAND MAY COME CLOSER TO FRUITION IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS, PARTICULARLY IF WE REMAIN WILLING TO BE CLEARSIGHTED (EVEN "HARDNOSED") AS AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE HAS HAD OCCASION TO BE VIS-A-VIS THE THAI IN RECENT MONTHS. WE HAVE SEEN SOME FORWARD MOTION.

C. IN THE LONG RUN OUR LARGEST INTEREST IN BURMA RELATES TO ITS ECONOMIC POTENTIAL, BUT IT MAY BE A VERY LONG RUN. WE HAVE HAD GOOD SUCCESS IN PRESERVING A NON-SECRET

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DISCRIMINATORY SHARE FOR AMERICANS IN SUCH ACCESS TO BURMA'S ECONOMY AS ITS GOVERNMENT WILL PERMIT. NEITHER WE NOR THE BURMESE NOR ANYONE ELSE, FOR THAT MATTER, HAVE HAD MUCH SUCCESS IN RAISING THE LEVEL OF PRODUCTIVITY TO THE POINT WHERE EQUAL ACCESS HAS MUCH MEANING. THERE IS NOW HOPE-- BUT NOT CONFIDENCE--THAT THE GUB MAY RELAX SOMEWHAT THE RIGIDITIES OF ITS NAIVE AND EXTREME SOCIALIST DOCTRINE AND ADOPT A MORE PRAGMATIC POLICY. IF IT DOES SO, AND IF BURMA DEMONSTRATES A PROPENSITY TO RAISE PRODUCTIVITY IN RESPONSE TO INVESTMENT, WE SHOULD CONSIDER OFFERING BILATERAL AID. BUT WE SHOULD LOOK FOR TANGIBLE AND QUANTIFIABLE INDICATORS OF HEIGHTENED PRODUCTIVITY.

D. BURMA'S NEUTRALISM HAS BEEN TO A DEGREE CATATONIC, AND THERE IS SOME HOPE--LIKEWISE STILL FAR FROM CONFIDENCE--OF A CHANGE. BURMA COULD WITH LUCK BECOME A KIND OF THIRD FORCE BETWEEN COMMUNIST INDOCHINA AND ASEAN. BURMA IS DEVELOPING A RATHER POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH VIETNAM, AND, NOW THAT THE CATAclysmic EVENTS OF 1975 HAVE

RELIEVED THE GUB OF ITS ALMOST PARANOID FEAR OF BEING
SUCKED INTO THE INDOCHINA WAR, IT IS BECOMING LESS AVERSE
TO SOME KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN.

3. POPULAR GOODWILL TOWARD THE U.S. AND AMERICAN VALUES
IS QUITE PALPABLE, AND FAVORABLE ATTITUDES ARE EVINCED
BY MOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS - WHEN NO ONE IS LOOKING.
BURMA'S EXPERIENCES UNDER ITS NAIVE AND EXTREME FORM OF
SOCIALISM APPEAR NOT TO HAVE MADE IT MORE RECEPTIVE TO
COMMUNISM, IF ANYTHING THE REVERSE. ONE OF OUR POLICIES
IS TO PROMOTE GOODWILL, IN GOOD PART THROUGH EDUCATIONAL
AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES, A POLICY IMPLEMENT THAT HAS
THOROUGHLY DEMONSTRATED ITS WORTH IN BURMA.

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ACTION EA-06

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-----141125Z 032488 /20

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AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
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4. THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BURMA ILLUSTRATES THE
CTMPLEXITY OF THIS PROBLEM, AND THE NEED FOR A RELATIVISTIC
APPROACH TO IT. THE GUB HAS A MIDDLING RECORD IN HUMAN

RIGHTS--A LACK OF FREEDOMS IN SOME IMPORTANT RESPECTS,
BUT NO SYSTEMATIC GOVERNMENTAL USE OF TORTURE, FOR
EXAMPLE. SO FAR, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO APPROACH DECISIONS
(ON ARMORED CAR SALES, ETCVV.) ON AN AD HOC BASIS, ASKING,
FOR EXAMPLE, WHETHER THE CARS WERE ACTUALLY LIKELY TO BE
USED IN SUPPRESSING PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATORS. BUT IF THE
POSSIBILITY OF AN AID PROGRAM DRAWS NEARER, I THINK IT
MIGHT BE HELPFUL TO US AND TO OTHER MISSIONS IN THE

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REGION IF WE COULD RATE THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN
COUNTRIES OF THE REGION ON THE ONLY MEANINGFUL BASIS--A
REGION-WIDE COMPARISON OF PERFORMANCE.

5. FINALLY, AT THE LEVEL OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY, IT
IS HIGH TIME SOMEONE IN THE DEPARTMENT INSISTED ON A
REGION-WIDE APPROACH TO ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES, TO PRO-
VIDE A MATRIX WITHIN WHICH THE VALUES AND PRIORITIES
STATED IN INDIVIDUAL COUNTRY PARAS WOULD ACQUIRE REAL
SIGNIFICANCE AND REAL UTILITY IN ALL THE MANY FIELDS TO
WHICH THE RESOURCES-ALLOCATION APPROACH IS APPLICABLE.
OSBORN

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